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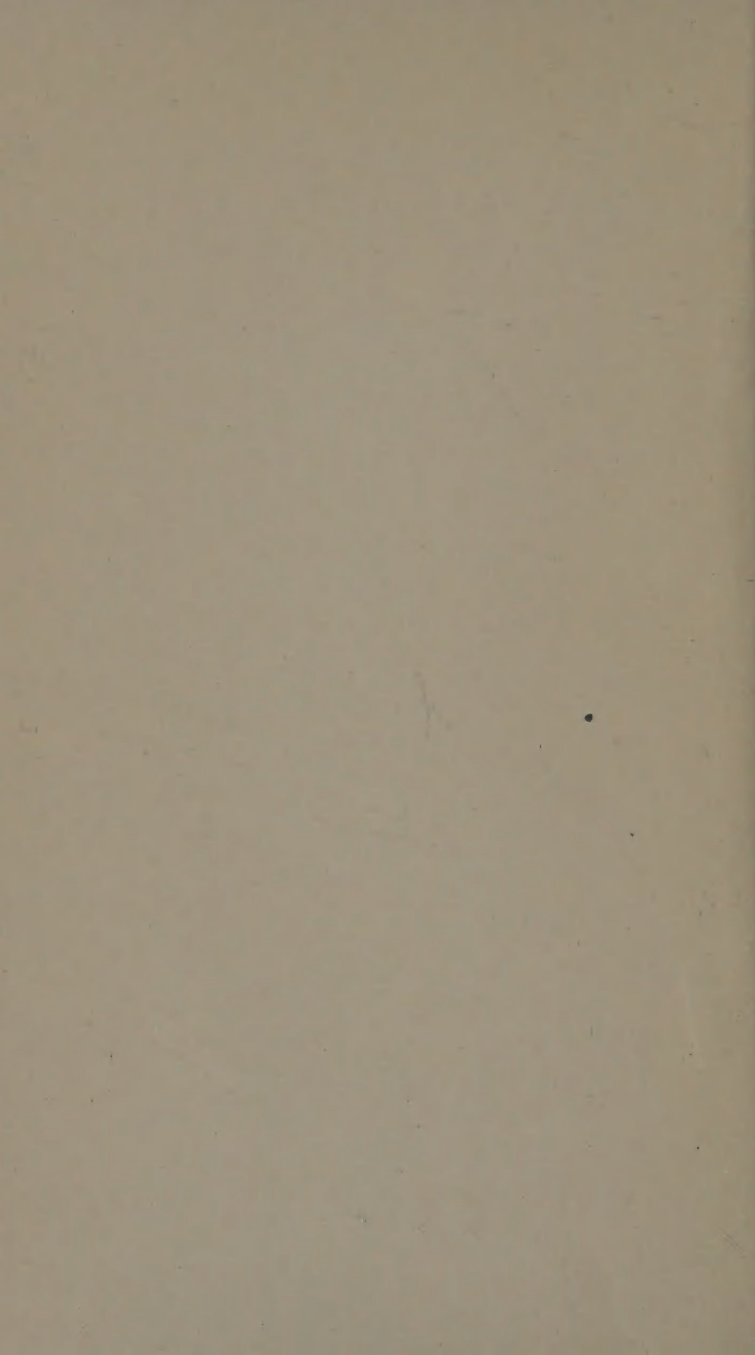
The Ever-Coming Kingdom of God

by Bernard Duhm



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THE EVER-COMING KINGDOM OF GOD

A DISCUSSION ON
RELIGIOUS PROGRESS

By BERNHARD DUHM, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF BASLE, SWITZERLAND

TRANSLATED BY DR. ARCHIBALD DUFF
OF BRADFORD

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FOREWORD

PROFESSOR DUHM'S Commentaries are among the most important Old Testament studies ever published even by German Theologians ; and none has as yet been turned into English. They will make a great impression when they are.

But the particular book written by Professor Duhm which has moulded the ideas of our time, more than perhaps any other book in the last generation, is his first-issued work, "Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der Israelitischen Religion " (1875). This work has never been published in translation. However, Professor Duhm is anxious to meet an eager English desire for his teaching, and he has authorised this version of a recent address on "The Ever-coming Kingdom of God," which is, in fact, a simple and beautiful summary of his "Theology of the Prophets."

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THE EVER-COMING KINGDOM OF GOD

Why do we live ?

As WE grow older the thought comes ever more frequently, that some day we are to die. The more plainly this thought comes, the more surely does it start the question—Why do I live? Why did I need to live? Was my life worth being lived?

When a thoughtful soul asks himself such questions, they lead him further still. He is carried away out beyond his own tiny being, for he remembers that he is only one leaf of the great tree of mankind; and he asks why this little planet, this transitory earth of ours, should bring forth men? Can it really give to its children aught that shall have enduring worth? Is it possible for the soul, launched into life by

no act of its own, to gain from this life something that shall be eternal, something that shall justify the act that made it live !

For six thousand years only has mankind had a history : only through that short space of time can we trace and recall the joys and pains of life. What they did before that, what they saw and suffered, has all been forgotten ; or it has been turned into fairy tales. Suppose that some higher being were to listen to the voices of all the sorts and conditions of men, and not of the living only, but also of all that are gone. Suppose that such an observer should catch the voices of all those who have simply vegetated and passed away, in homes far aside from the great high roads of men. Suppose he should catch the utterances of all who have been ground down under invasions and oppressions, or who have been overwhelmed by the catastrophes of nature. Suppose him listening to all the cries of bliss and woe, of hope and of despair, that have welled up from the depths of human hearts from the very first. If we can suppose such a higher being listening to all these, what should he think of the fate of men

or of the meaning of their existence? With what final chord would the symphony close as he listened? Would it all end like Beethoven's great "Ninth" with the "Ode to Joy"? or would it rather be like the lament of the Old Testament sage, "All is vanity! A man has no profit under the sun!"?

How hope arose and grew

So long as mankind was all young, each one took from the world with childish eagerness whatever he could get. They lived for the moment: they thought seldom of the past, and almost never of the future. Half consciously and half unthinking, they fashioned for themselves their various forms of society. They discovered their simple rights, almost with the same logical regularity with which in the forgotten dawn of time they had performed that most wonderful accomplishment of the human race, the invention of speech. They fitted their pleasures and their play to their necessities; by a genuine art they pictured to themselves all that is, and all that ought to be; thus they built up for themselves a childlike

philosophy of the world. Then gradually civilisation progressed, and the needs and tasks of life rose ever higher and grew more complicated. At first this increased both their strength and their enthusiasm, but later on they stumbled over hindrances, and against limits; thus came differences and contradictions, followed at last by disintegration and demoralisation. The cold mid-winter hour had come: strength failed, and all the world around seemed full of enemies.

The more thoughtful asked for the causes of all this. Was it fault, or was it fate? Among the common folk were invented legends of the lost Golden Age, and the lamentation that it was gone for ever. Of course, the prophets, the poets, and the philosophers spoke rather of ideals for the future, even of eternal ideals; of a state of perfect bliss within the soul, and of a final end of all things.

What a long line of those visions of perfection and of the future have been conceived and recorded in the past three thousand years! And how often do these contradict

each other! Aye, what a tragedy it is, that just the most gifted peoples of all the earth, from those dwelling by the Sacred Ganges to those of the wild inhospitable Iceland, have all come to the one conclusion, summed up in those sad utterances, "Vanity of Vanities! All is Vanity!" "Nirvana!" "Twilight of the Gods!" This has seemed the end of all!

But we of to-day, we Christians—what idea of the world do we prefer? What do we think of its value, and of its future, or of its final end? Those who come after us will find it hard to say just what may have been the leading opinions of our time concerning the world and life. Plenty of theories of the universe there are among us: certainly every few years a new one is proposed. But there is not one truly great, all-embracing, kindly comprehension of the world. Our barbarian ancestors had such; for, courageous and defiant, they looked forward to a day when Gods and men would stand shoulder to shoulder, fighting a final battle against the powers of chaos, although only to fail for ever in that fight.

Those fathers of ours heard by-and-by the

Christian Gospel proclaimed, telling of an end of the world, which should be followed by a new beginning. So now impatiently, but with heroic asceticism, they set about preparations for that coming higher world. Alas, their systems of self-denial, of service and of merit, became always more and more artificial and refined, until at last the ebb-tide of spiritual exhaustion had arrived once more. Then again the old Christian Gospel was rediscovered, teaching this time a more inward relation to the great Lord of all things, and therefore an inward and positive claim to the heirship of His better world. So now men gained the peace of a religious conviction, and the inspiration and guidance of a moral conscience.

Present lack of hope

TO-DAY we are Christians, and Protestants withal; but why have we lost the eagerness to understand the whole world and to rest in sure mastery of it? Where is our certainty of the future? Where is our foretaste of victory? Religion is still alive among us, of course: but how it divides and dwindles away

in a thousand different channels! Religion is not, as it once was, the great river of life carrying all the many waters, united in one, down to the mighty ocean. Every man is thinking of himself, and the highest aim of each is to win for himself a sure little corner in the other world.

We are, it may be, very diligent; and we are well skilled in founding societies and sets, understanding how to combine activities and even to reunite conflicting parties. But we have not a sense of unity that is at once natural and effective; for we do not know ourselves to be the People of God, who are surely to inherit the earth. We have grown cautious by experience, and so we are nervously afraid of the question whether the fellowship of the faithful, which is essentially invisible, may nevertheless take on openly some visible form of incorporation and activity. When we try to fashion such we make mistake after mistake, because behind our attempts we lack the prime creative power of religion. We rely on mere theory, on some need of the hour, or on some clever policy. Our idea of what things

are and mean, if we have any such idea, grows no longer out of the strong fundamental feeling that is rooted in religion; it is purveyed for us rather by our scientific studies, or by our philosophies, or perhaps it is brought to us by some great poetic soul, or by our political chiefs, or even by the mere fashions of the day.

Where is the fault?

WHERE lies the blame that we are so singularly feeble and broken? Is it that we lack the old reverence for religion? Or are we wanting in such moral earnestness in life as our fathers possessed? Do we lack zeal for works of Christian charity? Such may be true of many of us, but it is scarcely more so now than it was in earlier days. If religion has many opponents, it has also many defenders. A host of friends of Christianity are diligently busy helping her to stand, and seeking to make her strong again.

Can it be, perhaps, that just in this busy diligence the chief fault lies? It is not men that should help religion: it is religion that should help men. If religion is really the power that we have counted it, then its work is

to create life. We can neither give life to religion, nor can we save its life, if that be lost. Christianity does claim to have the life-giving power,—why then do we feel so little of it?

The real nature of Christianity is Life

THE old Indian Wisdom said that the real root of life is the will to live; and the Indian sages condemned this will to live, because they looked on individual life as a misfortune. But Christianity wills to have and give life; and it calls itself the way to life.

Christianity is a will and not a doctrine. If it were a doctrine it would stand on the same level with other doctrines, which come and then pass away again. And in that case those efforts would be justified, which were made in the last century, to regard faith as a kind of knowledge, and to criticise, condemn, or defend it as such. Now we may of course set up doctrines and theories concerning Christianity, as we do concerning our physical life, and then we may constantly improve our doctrines and enlarge them: indeed we are bound to do all this. But doctrines must not step in to take the

place of religion; they must always be its modest followers. Their duty is at most to free the way for religion, through the many hindrances that grow up in her path.

We may have given too much importance to our doctrines and principles; or we have pressed too much to the front our standpoints, tendencies, schools, and all such things devised of men. Possibly this is the chief cause of our small-souled hesitations, and our nervous feebleness. As Isaiah said, we "have not seen the work of God"; we have not understood that religion's chief concern is with the processes of the world and with its fate. God's great work is the creation of these two.

Christianity's kernel

WHAT is the foundation of Christianity? It is hope! Hope that the reign of God shall come soon. Jesus planted that hope as the centre of religion when he bade his disciples pray: "Our Father! Thy Kingdom come!" Christianity is a prayer, a desire, a longing! It is the desire that God may become King in the world of men, as He is in Heaven. The

desire for one's own salvation is not the first and weightiest concern : the demand for a transformation of the world is the chief thing.

In this we shall find the sense of unity that we need ; here is the living and moving power that has been so much missed in these last days. Here we can discover again the grand conception of the world's value, that we can set up joyfully over against the pitiful cry of the Jewish sceptic, over against the Indian dream of extinction in Nirvana, and over against the Northern lament for the Waning Twilight of the Gods.

Do we pray : " Thy Kingdom Come " ?

THE prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of God has been uttered for two thousand years, and by hundreds of millions of Christian hearts. Yet, if we might hold an investigation we should probably discover that only a very few persons ever feel what they say when they offer the prayer. With the most, it is a much weightier matter to pray for daily bread ; while many others are chiefly anxious for the forgiveness of their sins, and for deliverance from evil. They understand these petitions, for they concern

their own life ; but they have lost all understanding of the great foundation prayer. In the past generations that had to fight, and often to fail, to battle and to bleed, men did understand the great petition. Some of them were sorely impatient, and we have been wont to call them fanatics ; but they proved at least what power there is in a strong faith for the future, even when it is all distorted.

Has the Kingdom come already ?

MANY devout souls of to-day keep themselves afar off from all the fancies which mark off the various religious divisions of society. They only smile in superior fashion at fanaticism and mysticism. They hold themselves calmly and reasonably ; caring only as they say for what is purely spiritual, what belongs to the inner man, and what is good and proper. They have thought over the matter, and have decided that the Kingdom of God has come already—long ago—and of course “ in the inner sense.” They find that its manifestation is especially to be seen in benevolent efforts to improve morality, and “ in the service of the

Church.” It is in such ways, say they, that we can work for the Kingdom of God, or work *at* the Kingdom; and they think that by such works they are healing the evils of society. The task of Jesus, as they think, was to teach us to love our neighbours; they are only a little uncertain, and not all at one, on the question whether He was in the main a social reformer, or perhaps also something more. To such persons the opinion that God Himself ever interferes in the matter, or means to interfere in the future, is mystical and unsound; for God can only work indirectly and by the agency of men. It is we who develop our own powers, and thereby bring about the ideal conditions. God, for His part, can at most give to each individual toiler his reward in the other world.

Some desire that nothing new be taught

THE activities undertaken by such as think in this way are certainly performed, in many cases, with much readiness for self-sacrifice. We are bound to give them all due regard, we are bound to acknowledge them fully, and we

must encourage them; we must not be troubled if at times the service is carried on with a good deal of noise and bustle. But the principles of these people are not in accord with the ideas of the Kingdom of God that we gather from the Bible. They take away from religion its glorious crown. Let us say it, once for all, that religion is a mystical thing from beginning to end. The persons we have in mind forget that religion has a life all its own; it is indeed the royal sister of morality, but not the handmaid thereof. Such people betray that unconscious and undue self-esteem which always marks an age of followers, "epigonic" imitators. Prophets expect everything from God: the mere followers believe that they have received of God, through their masters, the Fathers, all that is most important; and now they have only to order, regulate, and organise what they have received. This is all they are bound to do. Very modestly and gently they take God's work out of His hands and mean to complete it for Him quite satisfactorily. The great mass of people commonly follow these persons; and are simply told that they must look

on religion as a perfect law and institution which was always exactly the same, and evermore must remain the same as these imitating guides describe it. The mere followers desire to have rest about them, and no unrest: they suspect anything that shows movement and change.

*But the Kingdom has been always moving,
always coming*

THE Kingdom of God whereof we hear in the Bible, is not here already: it is coming. We are waiting for it: we are praying that it may come. We are preparing ourselves to have a full share in it. Of course we are preparing by our moral endeavours, but not by these alone. This is the meaning of Christianity; this is its very life and power. The hope for the Kingdom is eternally unresting, and it is always moving us. It works differently in different souls and ages; it is at one time a bright clear foretaste of all perfection, at other times it is only a dim reflection thereof. It has a history of its own; but in the end it shall gather together the whole history of the world into

one grand climax which is itself realised. It has not always existed, at least not always in such sort that men have been clearly conscious of it; yet doubtless all along they have felt its hidden impulse. It had its rise and its emergence into the full light, much as a plant grows up out of the hidden roots into the sunshine. So it advanced, amid the favour or the disfavour of the times, until the coming of its Master by whom it was to become a tree of life for all.

Its rise in the early Hebrew days

IN the earliest literature of the Bible the idea of the Kingdom of God does not appear. Perhaps indeed there was something of it present in that enthusiasm with which early Israel flung itself into the "Wars of Jahweh." Possibly it was there as a premonition when Elisha, the rich peasant who had been ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, suddenly left house and home to become the humble attendant of a poor man of God, and to be the Prophet's servant who poured water upon his master's hands. But the great mass of the peasantry

of those days felt little of such an impulse, at least in their ordinary life.

They lived in a rugged material contentment with the present, satisfied with themselves and their possessions. They were sure that they stood in the best of relationships with their God; for He dwelt among them, housing at a thousand different sanctuaries in the land. You had but to repair to one such, to call upon Him and to be heard. God blessed their fields, their flocks, and their families; He protected them from enemies seen and unseen. When every summer the earth, that fairy self-spreading table, gave so wondrously and abundantly the rich harvest from the little handfuls of seed that they had scattered, all this came to pass because Divine power was in all the soil. So when the sickle reaped the fields, the first sheaf was brought to the God, because He owned the whole; and the last sheaf was dropped on the wayside, for the poor, the clients and special protégés of God. When a newly planted vineyard was pruned for the first time, it was felt that this made the vines non-sacred, for they were being taken away from

the God. He demanded the first-born lamb for Himself, and in like manner the first child of every woman. When a man built himself a house, the plot of ground whereon it stood must first be bought from the Deity of the soil by means of a sacrificial feast.

There was no thought of a life after death

It is almost impossible for us to conceive to-day how very much the life and work of the Deity were interwoven with the life of men; but we can understand that a people with such thoughts and feelings would not gaze out towards future ideal good. They expected nothing at all from life beyond the grave. The peasant hoped that he should not die until his measure of life was full; and that then he should be buried in his own soil beside his fathers, leaving behind him a son who should guard the grave in honour, and should lay at times some food thereon for the spirit of the parent. They never dreamed of any recompense for this life in the hereafter: for them there was no Heaven, there was no Hell.

*The early worship : all concerned the material
present*

THE happiest times they had were the occasions when they cultivated intercourse between the divine and human spheres. At these occasions divine worship was not so much a duty, as it is in our view ; to share in it was rather the right of all the worshippers, and each received thence honour and joy. In the very earliest times the Bedouin went to meet his God at every new moon ; later on the peasant held communion with Him on every seventh day. Then the servants and handmaidens, the sons and the daughters, the ox and the ass might possibly be left busily at work ; but the peasant himself put on his robes of ceremony, and sat down to the feast with his God. Worship consisted in such eating and drinking. The special occasions for this worship were the great agricultural festivals ; those harvest feasts, two of which we celebrate to this day, although in quite altered form, in our Easter and Whitsuntide. For these farm festivals they would repair to one of their more famous sanctuaries : they would arrange the camp hearth and boil the festal food.

They would present the first and best portion to the God ; and, all having feasted, they danced enthusiastically the sacred dance around the particular spot where the God was supposed to sit. Then when the due moment arrived, the priest would proclaim silence as the God issued from His abode, although of course invisibly, to bless them all.

What more could those peasants desire or devise? They had all that they could wish. Their religion was a matter for those particular days, and the particular place, and for the assembled fellowship of kinsmen. Such conceptions had nothing to do with the world as a whole, nothing with the future; they had nothing to do with eternity, nor with any possibly immortal part in man. Even psalms written in the far later days are wont to chant "The dead praise God no more."

Such religion might suit some to-day

ALL this seems very strange to us ; and yet it is a question whether a great number of men around us now could not easily and gladly be satisfied with a worship of such a sort. For

anxiety concerning our fate after death is of course always near us, and seems indeed to hover over our every step; yet most men think very seldom about it, and think of it very unwillingly when they meddle with it at all. No man thinks to-day about the Day of Judgment; that idea is far too grand for us, and lies too much out of our way of life. We too are creatures of the day, all taken up with the sense of the material present. At most some misfortune arouses us out of this unconcern; but the blow seldom finds the soul in such a mood that it can easily rise to higher things.

The beginnings of thought for the future

NEVERTHELESS it does not seem to be good for men to be shut into their own little circle in time and space, and to lie down content thus as in a chrysalis. So although the Israelites were at first a horde of nomads, yet they worked their way upwards, until they founded a kingdom of peasants. Then they thought contentedly to sit still and make no farther progress; but just therefore they went back-

wards. It began to look as if they were to follow neighbouring nations who had vanished completely from the world and from history, in spite of their possession of civilisations and religions. Hosea says "Ephraim's hair is turning grey, but he does not see it." In Isaiah's time the men of Judah cried, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall be dead."

The coming of The End. Amos' cry

AND yet this little people was to be stirred, and raised still further. For there was something in Israel and in its religion that could not be thoroughly at rest in the comfortable life of the peasant, or in the proud life of their aristocracy. This strain in the race would not be quenched; it pressed forward among the people and raised its voice. In Bethel, around the Royal Sanctuary there, multitudes had assembled for one of the great festivals. There were the rich peasants, who "dwelt among their own people," and who cared nothing for king or vizier. There was the courtier in gay foreign dress, who with superior air looked down on the common folk. There were the great ones of

the State, who sometimes supported the Government and sometimes overturned it, but who at all times looked after themselves. There was the man-at-arms proudly telling tales of his latest heroic deeds in the wars with those hereditary enemies the Syrians. There too were the companies of pilgrims and religious wanderers; there were priests conscious of their dignity, and dervishes full of afflatus.

Some were bringing their sacrificial victims to the slaughter, some would be paying their tithes; all would be getting their gifts and generosities loudly announced. Stirring songs were rising to the honour of the God, with accompaniment of harp, or of the latest invention in musical instruments.

Then stepped out from the crowds of the poorer festival pilgrims a man in the smock of the shepherd and field labourer, who cried aloud into the midst of the hum of worship, "Ye fools! Is it you who think to win the favour of Jahweh? Is it you who expect His coming, on some great day of God. Jahweh will come indeed; but to bring night and not light, not deliverance but destruction.

He seeks no sacred feast, He hates your festivals ! ”

Then the shaggy man told of visions he had had, wherein he had wrestled and pleaded with Jahweh that if possible the people might be saved. But Jahweh had answered, “The End of this People has come : I will spare them no more. Yea, even if they should bury themselves in the under-world, I would seize them there ! Even were they to flee up into the sky, thence would I hurl them down ! If they should hide in the depths of the sea, the serpent should bite them there.”

Now the people grow restless : excitement shows its signs. The chief priest of the Royal Sanctuary scents conspiracy, and sends a report to the king ; next he drives this demagogue teacher—as he counts Amos—out and away over the frontiers.

But the oracle of “The End ” had sounded, and it has never been silent since. It shall sound evermore until The End has come.

*How all the prophets repeated this oracle of
“The End”*

THAT oracle of “The End!” Amos had proclaimed it in wrath, in the very hour when king and people were thinking they might look for a happy future; but after Amos was gone, the tender, great-hearted Hosea only repeated it, sometimes with passionate indignation, sometimes, indeed, awestruck and shrinking from the fearful thought. He says, “Thus hath said Jahweh, ‘My own soul turns against me: suddenly my pity pours forth!’” Then Micah cries, “Because of you, oh elders of Judah, Zion shall become a ploughed field, and the Temple shall become like a shrine hidden in a forest!” And Isaiah declares that he has been commanded to work until the cities are desolate and without dwellers, until the homes have never a family, and until all Judah’s classes and masses go down into the under-world, leaving no joy, nor any sound. Finally Jeremiah sings:

*“A wail o’er the dead
Let me chant to the hills !*

*A lament raise,
In the sweetest vales !*

*“ No wanderer treads this waste,
No sound is heard !
All wild things run ;
The birds have flown.”*

But this cry meant a New Hope

Now it was with this oracle concerning The End that there began the development which was to lead up to the idea of the Kingdom of God, that development which should attain its noblest height in Christianity. It is a singular fact that expectation of The End has begun the highest flights of all religions. Since that day of the Prophets, every fresh revival of religion has been marked at first by a reawakening of the sense of the approaching end of all things. So it was among the first Christians, so also in the days of the Reformation ; and even in Islam the expectation of The End : “ That tolling hour when men become like fluttering moths and mountains are as rags torn from

the fleece," was the mightiest driving power in initiating this Semitic world-religion.

To explain how Amos came to his terrible proclamation, not a few have supposed that he had foreseen the later triumphs of the Assyrians. They have fancied that the Shepherd from the desert of Judah had simply possessed better political foresight than all the Israelites of his time. But Amos himself never gives us to understand that he has been drawing his conclusions from the political constellations; he never once names the Assyrians, and if he ever thought of them, he simply considered them as an instrument in the hands of Jahweh. Through Hosea, Jahweh cries, "'Tis I that am the destroying moth in Ephraim, and the gnawing worm in Judah." Isaiah declares: "'Tis Jahweh that makes the great conspiracy against His people." Jahweh was to be the destroyer of His people, by pestilence, by earthquake, or by war.

Why should The End be so proclaimed?

WHY did Jahweh purpose to destroy His people? The Prophets certainly answer this question

fully enough ; but the people did not understand the answer, they counted their Prophets either uncanny or crazy croakers. Even the Jews after the exile did not understand those prophecies, although they had actually suffered what the Prophets threatened, as we are told by one of themselves. They sought after quite different reasons from those the Prophets had given, and fancied that it was because the people before the Exile had in some way fallen away from their "Law," and had become idolaters. But the Prophets had never spoken of the "Law." They very seldom speak of idolatry ; and when they do so it is mostly in the same sense in which our Protestant fathers called the Catholics idolaters for their praying to the Saints as well as to God. No, the reasons the earlier Prophets gave were above all things the people's perversion of justice, their oppression of the weak, such as orphans and widows ; and perhaps to some extent also they condemned the decay of the primitive simplicity and purity of manners, and blamed the love for political coquetry and foreign alliances. The Prophets' audiences understood very well that God

could send judgments on them for such things; but they fancied that in such a case they could soothe Him and bring Him round again, by loud prayer and abundant sacrificial feasts. But it was just this fancy that gave chief dissatisfaction to the Prophets. The nature of God, and of men's relation to Him, was clearly one thing in the view of the people, and quite an opposite thing in the view of the Prophets. Both said, "Jahweh is our God and we are His people"; but then the people went on to say, "He and we belong together, we serve Him with many gifts and loud praises; and He on His part will always be with us in the end, even although He has been displeased for a while, just as blood-relations are true to each other in spite of occasional coolness." "Oh, yes!" Amos would answer with bitter scorn, "it is indeed you only among all the nations of the earth that Jahweh has known, and just therefore it is that He will punish you." So too Hosea's mind is that "Jahweh can do without the Israelites. They shall seek Him again some day with their oxen and their sheep to offer to Him; but they shall not find Him any

more, for He has gone away from them." Then Isaiah says, "The people must perish, because they always grow less able to see Jahweh's working, and to understand it." All of which means according to our way of expression that Jahweh is a moral Being and not to be reached by mere material influence; so that if a people would live with Him, their life must be a moral life, and when it is not so, then they turn their relation to Jahweh into destruction for themselves. Of course, all this sounds very familiar to us, and we might say that every child among us knows it well; but it is just the highest truths that are always the simplest, and just what is simplest is always worst understood. We may say quite plainly, that no people of antiquity ever understood fully these simple truths, or at least they never looked upon them as entirely sufficient for religion.

The Prophets' standard and ideal

LET us set down fairly in a few words what the Prophets demanded. They would have been pleased with the people, and sure of a

happy future if men had kept to rightly ordered constitutional and social arrangements, and had held fast to the old simple customs; if they had protected and supported the feeble and the poor, who were God's wards; if they had preserved faithfulness in civil affairs, in business and in manners; if they had hated material waywardness; and if, in fine, they had trusted God for the guidance of their lot. Then they would have been a real people of Jahweh, as they had seemed minded to be at the beginning in the time of David. The morality which the Prophets desired was certainly not a morality of the soul in the inner and thoroughly human sense; it was rather civic morality in the national and social sense. And the religious personality that the Prophets thought of was not the inner spirit in a man, it was rather the continuous people, with all their arrangements of the state and their various fellowships.

Thus it was a very simple ideal that the Prophets represented. The people of God, the nation whose King was Jahweh, had little in common with what we are accustomed

to-day to count the citizens of the Kingdom of God. There was never any talk of redeemed persons and converted souls in our sense of the words; there was nothing transcendental in the Prophets' conception of a people of God, and no light from a higher immortality beamed in upon their thinking. Yet we must never forget that the individuals in that people of God had an immediate and real communion with their Deity; He was not an other-worldly distant being, but present and accessible everywhere in His own land. He made Himself known through His chosen ones; yet any common man might literally "summon Him." Therefore the ideal of the Prophets did certainly not amount to a mere deistic moral purpose, for which the idea of Deity was only an added decoration. The Prophets' ideal was for this life, and God Himself belonged to this life, although of course to the invisible part of it. Now, whether we say that this was a low ideal, or whether we consider that as it sprang from actual history it accorded well with the laws of sound development; in either case we must observe clearly this consequence,

that a people or community, and not an individual invisible spirit, was the fountain which brought forth the very highest ideas that were ever attained in the Biblical religion. Therefore a one-sided individualism can never be a just clue to the fundamental conceptions of that Biblical religion.

The new oracle of the Kingdom that is coming

Amos said that "The End" had come; how then did the promise arise "The Kingdom of God is at hand?" We do not know whether Amos had any idea of the possibility of a new beginning, a new effort of God to create a righteous people; we do not know whether he thought of this, for he says nothing about it. Certainly it should be psychologically almost unthinkable, that he believed nothing more was ever to exist. Hosea and Micah never speak of hopes of a restoration of any sort; the comforting utterances one does find in their books are nearly all additions by much later hands. Jeremiah, the last of the Prophets of the older sort, did at first cherish hopes that an inner yearning for true bliss would lead the

fallen people back again to Jahweh ; and that Ephraim, the lost favourite son of Jahweh, even while wandering in the far-off wilderness, should see God again, and would return along the same road whereon he had wandered into misery. Even shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 B.C., and again just after it, Jeremiah kept on expecting that the remnant of the people would rise again to some little happiness. But when at last this hope proved fruitless, he said to his faithful comrade Baruch, "Jahweh has been compelled to root up what He had planted, although thou didst hope for bliss restored ! Hope no more !" Yet certainly he wrote to the exiled Jews, "Pray ye also in the foreign land for the good of the city unto which you have been driven away." We feel strongly inclined to believe that the Prophet surely did not think the utter end had come ; although he did not picture what new things were still to be.

The author of the new hope was Isaiah

ISAIAH was the man who unfolded most fearfully the idea of the coming destruction ; yet

it was he who encouraged most the hope for a new beginning. As we read his writings, the feeling comes over us that the Prophet counted himself as one set in the twilight of the evening, which the night is sure to follow ; but that nevertheless he sees a few stars, and has a premonition of a new "great rose of dawn." He says, "I will wait for Jahweh, who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob, and I will set my hope in Him ! I and my sons are for signs from Him, Who dwells upon Mount Zion." So he called one of his sons "A remnant shall return" (Shear-Jashub). Even though the people should be ruined, yet Jahweh was laying a corner-stone in Zion that should not be moved. Certainly no man could see that corner-stone, but they must believe in it. "He that believeth is he that abideth." These are sentences which built up a new world ; they are revelations that worked with living power ; they are thoughts which we trace on into the pages of the New Testament. An End was coming for this people who were now filling Jahweh's courts with their noisy festival cries ; but a new light should beam for those

who waited and who hoped because they believed.

Among Old Testament students, it is a controverted question whether we should attribute to Isaiah himself certain prophecies which describe the final catastrophe and the new period that was thereupon to follow ; and whether he himself composed, perhaps in his later years, those wonderful lyrics that speak of a future descendant of David, who should bring back the divine peace of a Golden Age for all mankind, and even for the beasts of the field. In this coming King's days, these verses go on to say, social order is to be restored in its old healthy fashion ; and all the nations around are to journey to Zion, to see there the worthy ways of the people of Jahweh, and to learn from Jahweh's rule and justice how to beat their swords into ploughshares. I need only mention these passages, and will not rely upon them. It is enough to have learned from oracles which all students hold to be Isaiah's own, that he did preach a hope for the future, and that he connected this with the famous spot on the royal and sacred mountain of Zion.

His hope looked for a new and better nation and kingdom in Jahweh's land, when the present evil people should have been all weeded out. When the Assyrian armies overran Judah, burned her towns, plundered her peasants, and carried away great bands of them into slavery, and when Sennacherib demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, then Isaiah's hope stood successfully its great testing. Since then, Jerusalem has been for all generations the Holy City of God; the nations of the earth are all to bow and shrink back silent before her, unless Jahweh Himself has bidden them draw near. And Christendom still sings to-day :

*“Jerusalem on high,
My song and city is,
My home whene'er I die,
The centre of my bliss.”*

*(“Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt!
Wollt Gott, ich wär' in dir !”)*

This conception of Heaven, or of Paradise, we owe to Isaiah, the man who beheld the invisible Power, even God, hovering by the

softly flowing waters of Siloah ; and knew that the raging nations would bow in the dust before Him. The Prophet wrote it down that : “ They are flesh : but in Jerusalem dwelleth the Lord of all Spirit-Power.”

*How Isaiah's followers lost the heights
he scaled*

THERE had gathered around Isaiah a band of disciples, doubtless only few in number, to whom he had entrusted his counsel and testimony as his final will and legacy. This group formed, so to speak, the first “ Church of the Believers,” the men who with Isaiah waited for the future. Surely they understood their master, and when he had passed away they must have sought to keep his spirit ever living in them, by collection and diligent study of his writings. Isaiah had been a Prophet, and no lawgiver, or reformer, or philosopher. He had not sought to heal the hurt of his people by some plan for a better constitution. His attitude to men and things had been of a purely religious nature ; he expected all things from God. But while the first generation of

followers may perhaps have seen all things in the visions of hope, as he had done, what about the later generations? As the days passed, there were sure to arise some with the character of the mere follower, those whom we call "epigons." These are the men who harden religious ideas into systems, and then turn these systems into starting-points and foundations for a new busy-body life of their own. Such men were not created for the lofty pure air of the ideal; their nature always compels them to insist on seeing to-day a realisation of all that the Prophets would have reserved for the hand of God and for the future. The political history of the nation seemed to these persons to demand that they should themselves construct the true People of God.

How the threatenings came true

ALL that the Prophets had threatened came to pass. The northern kingdom of Israel had gone to pieces in 720 B.C., and the territories of the Jewish kingdom also were then fearfully harassed, Jerusalem being left alone like a lodge in a vineyard. Isaiah had been right in

his far-sighted opinion, that the people would be sure to sink always lower religiously. The religious and moral health of the people was utterly bound up with their physical condition, as is the case among all peoples and individuals who find their entire satisfaction in this life. Therefore when troubles came one after another, until there was only one continuous trouble that never ceased at all, then such people as remained sank lower and lower in every way. Among the peasants, the old demonistic religion kindled into life again; around the mountain sanctuaries drunken worshippers howled, as they tried to forget their misery for an hour; in gloomy valleys fathers sacrificed their children, to try to please the Deity who seemed to have grown dangerous. Foreign deities were worshipped everywhere in the land, and in Jerusalem every street had its altar. The people of the capital city, who were in part indeed of non-Israelite descent, were morally corrupt and were hard-hearted towards the country folk, as if these were the more blameworthy. Isaiah had believed that all this must come about, and that the utter

ruin of the people must follow as he threatened. A hundred years after Isaiah, suddenly an unknown wild people from the far north appeared in the land ; they were the Scythians from Caspian steppes. They flew on their swift horses through all the lands along the Levantine shore, everywhere plundering and devastating. Such terror did they cause that you trace its mark away into the Apocalypse in the New Testament seven hundred years later. The End of all things was knocking at the door ! “ The great and terrible Day of Jahweh is near,” cried the prophet Zephaniah. “ Jahweh means to sweep all things off the earth, both man and beast.” In these hours Jeremiah beheld his many heartrending visions of the incoming chaos.

How a formal Legalistic school arose

BUT now this situation seems as if it had been definitely arranged in order to call the busybodies of the prophetic party to action. On the one side was the threatening ruin, which could not but be plain to every soul that had still some religious feeling ; on the other side was the Isaian hope that a new building of God,

never to be destroyed, was going to rise upon the noble foundation stone in Mount Zion. Add also to these things the fact of the collapse of the old popular religion, and note that there was a young king (Josiah, 640-610 B.C.) whose influence might be enlisted; here was a coincidence of circumstances that promised success, if a certain venture should be made. Might not some busy persons themselves realise the ideals of Hosea and of Isaiah? Could they not drive away the old religion, with its many local sanctuaries, with its sensuous extravagances, with its superstition, with its boorish coarseness and ignorance, and with all its foreign novelties? Could there not be established a People ruled in righteousness, with humane laws, removed as far as possible from contact with foreign peoples and strange religions, and having all their life and ways centred in and around God's holy hill of Zion, and all directed by a reformed priesthood? It was true indeed that the great Prophets had reserved for God's own Hand the new ordering of all things; but might not these enthusiasts themselves realise the Prophets'

ideal? If they only could, then Jahweh would, as in ancient days, again prefer the Hebrew People before all others; and so the great days of a Moses and a David would be surely seen again. Out of such conceptions, and out of consequent action, sprang the Deuteronomic Reformation.

In the year 621 B.C. there was suddenly discovered in the Temple a book which professed to describe the last utterances of Moses; it is what became later on the kernel of our book of Deuteronomy. The newly discovered roll taught what Judah had to do in order to be truly the People of Jahweh, and how such a nation might now live on in His land happily for ever. The new rules demanded simply that offerings to Jahweh must be presented at one place only,—and Zion was the place chosen : —all other places of sacrifice must be destroyed. The book taught that there was only one Jahweh, and therefore the faith in Him could not be split up into worship of the many Jahwehs supposed to dwell in the many old shrines. Along with these principles there were plenty of instructions and directions concerning

a righteous, humane, and pure life ; and while many of these were of a thoroughly ideal nature, many others of them were simply expressions of the current ideas concerning improvement in civilisation,—ideas which of course ought not to have been identified with the religion.

This new Deuteronomic constitution made worship, and all that is connected therewith, the chief feature in the state and in the life of the people. By the aid of the royal power, the new order was adopted ; and now its supporters believed that the demands of the prophets had all been fulfilled. A covenant was made with Jahweh : Judah was to be His chosen people, exalted high above all the nations of the earth. They fancied that the Kingdom of God was now really founded, and that it only remained to put away all sorts of irregularities, and no doubt also to atone for many an old fault.

*But this plan was not the ideal of the
Prophets*

Was the prophetic ideal actually realised ? It certainly seemed as if the old popular religion

was now done away. Indeed it had been for many a day outworn and debased; although many a strain of the old system remained alive, and showed itself in practice. The people began to separate themselves from all other nations; they tried to think out more spiritual conceptions of God; they preached continually obedience to His voice, namely, to the commands and directions which stood written in the newly found Book; they spoke of love to God, and of justice and kindness towards their fellow-countrymen, and of the dangers of seduction by false prophets and even by misguided members of their own families. Was not all this enthusiastic activity in perfect accord with what the Prophets had desired, and with true religion?

The twofold aims

THE question was answered in two contradictory ways, by the two most noted men of those Deuteronomic times. Jeremiah said, "No!" Ezekiel said "Yes!" Jeremiah said that the men of the Book, who were so proud of their wisdom, had with their pens

changed the divine counsel into a lie. It was of no use, he claimed, to boast of the Temple, and to present proper offerings; for the heart (the "lebh") was still the same as of old, and it could no more change itself than could the skin of the Ethiopian. Therefore, in spite of the Temple, the people were going to ruin.

Ezekiel, on the other hand, seeks to develop the Deuteronomic laws still further. He draws up a plan for the future of a People who shall live separated from the world, who practise only the correct worship, and who shall live encompassed by divine miracles. Their Holy City is to be called "Jahweh is there."

Both men had their adherents and followers. The adherents of the prophet Jeremiah were a few godly persons who were dissatisfied with the present and its religious exercises, and who therefore sought their better life in an inner relation to God, and continued to wait for the future, and to hope. The adherents of Ezekiel, on the other hand, were the priests and the scribes, whose oral and literary activity continually developed the Laws, and made them familiar to the people. These adherents were

the architects of Theocracy ; and they looked to the future only for the victory and glory it should bring to this Theocracy, and for the government of the whole world by this Jewish Church called "The Kingdom of Priests."

Whoever understands human nature knows well that the direction chosen by Ezekiel was sure to be the favourite among the mass of the people ; with them, that method always wins which best offers a visible provision for their present needs, and gives rules which can be easily handled, and results which can be easily measured. It is only given to a few to carry an ideal in the heart, which will remain always an ideal, and will become more and more ideal the further one presses on towards it. That experience is never given to the great mass. Only Prophetic natures can dare to expect the realisation of a great hope from the very Hand of God himself, instead of taking the matter into their own hands : the ordinary man counts his own action much better and surer. So the wisdom of the Scribes, from which Jeremiah predicted no good result, gained the victory over the spirit of the older Prophecy.

And so it was until He came, who said that the Secret of God is revealed to babes, and not to the wise ; who broke the yoke of the laws and the developments thereof, and who took the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven out of the hands of those scribes who had been leading the people.

How the two theories were interwoven

So from this time forward there were two lines of development ; one aiming at the nobler ideal, the other working for the Law and the Theocracy. It is of course scarcely necessary to note that these two lines were not so purely and clearly separated from each other in ordinary life, as the requirements of exposition have obliged us to regard them in our discussion. In one respect they had of course a common element, in that both expected something in the future ; the one hoping for inner peace, the other for outward triumphs. We are to see presently, however, certain concrete expectations for the future, which became more and more the common crystallisation points for the ideas of both.

One writer above all others was far too great to be classified as belonging to any one line of development; the great unknown author, namely, of Isaiah, cc. 40 to 55. His mental character would require us to set him on the idealistic side; but the whole Jewish world has been enriched by his ideas and utterances. The views and claims of the Theocratic men were lifted by his work to their higher levels; and his influence is clearly traceable away into the New Testament writings themselves. It was he who gave the national hopes for the future their loftiest tone, and filled them with the immeasurable boldness of his own outlook. No one else has had such influence in bringing the whole of the world of nations, and even the whole of the physical world as well, into the range of men's expectations for the future. He forges the idea of Jahweh's Kingship in Zion into a conception of rule of the whole universe. His conception is certainly parallel in form to the eschatologies of India, of Persia, or of the Germanic peoples; but its contents are greater and higher than all these.

The Conception of The End and of the New Day in Deutero-Isaiah

It was the appearance of Cyrus the Persian, and his unexampled victorious march across all the world then known to the Israelites, that let loose the electric charge gathering in the breast of this great enthusiast. Now, thought he, must come the great crisis and fulness of the times, which Jahweh has been so long preparing and proclaiming, even from the foundation of the world. Jahweh's bird of prey from the rising of the sun, Cyrus who is His Anointed, is destroying the kingdoms of the earth and making all their princes helpless. Jahweh breaks all bars before him, and opens for him the hidden treasure-chambers. But Jahweh does this for His own sake; He has sworn that every knee in heaven and in earth shall bow before Him whom all the starry host obey, who stretches out the heavens as a carpet, who weighs the lands in scales, and measures the sea in the hollow of His hand, and with whom nations are as a drop on a bucket. Well may His troubled people tremble, having neither courage nor hope; they are His

poor blind and deaf servants : and yet they are to be the witnesses of His great deeds. And though the heavens scatter like smoke, though the earth crumble like a worm-eaten garment, and men die like moths ; yet Jahweh's salvation shall be for ever, and His arm shall rule the nations. Zion is miserable, and is besieged on every side ; but new foundations are to be laid for her, and her roofs shall be adorned with rubies. Her walls shall be built of precious stones, and the kings of the earth shall come to lick the dust off the feet of Israel. These are the words of the spokesman of a small and utterly crushed people : such could be the oracle of the follower of those Prophets who had proclaimed the coming of The End. No bolder words were ever spoken : never anything apparently so senseless ! This Deutero-Isaiah was a pure idealist in proclaiming these things ; but we must grant that his brilliant visions of the future were quite usable by those of his people who were commonly at home in a more earthly atmosphere.

This strange fact was made possible, because Deutero-Isaiah kept firm hold of the historical

process of events, and of the earth as the scene of their occurrence. It was the actual Zion that he thought of, with its Temple which Cyrus was to build again. It was on the actual soil of the chosen People that the wondrous glory of Jahweh was to be disclosed. The singer never thought of another world, or of supernatural interference; but he declared with great emphasis that it was Jahweh alone who worked all things, and Jahweh was incomparably greater than all the world. And yet while for this man only Jahweh's word and power could endure eternally, and on the other hand earth and heaven were mere transitory things; probably very few about him could grasp these spiritual ideas of his. The realism of the Semites could never make anything of the dreams of its poets, unless it understood them in the most material and literal sense possible.

The great disappointment

FOR such Jews as might return from the exile a sore disappointment was certain. The victories of Cyrus over their oppressors, the Babylonians, had led the exiles to expect a re-

establishment of the Jewish nation ; but where were they to find the glory of Jahweh which was to be disclosed to them before the eyes of all the world ? In and around Jerusalem there was nothing to be seen save a little fellowship of Jews, who had to pay taxes to the Persian over-lord, and must toil wearily for their daily bread. Was this then the Kingdom of God which all nations should serve ?

The first prophets of the new Jewish people said " Build the Temple again, and then will come the Great Day, and then shall arise the Great People. Then seven strangers shall lay hold of the robe of one Jew, as he hastens to the sacred land, and they will beg him to take them with him, because they have heard that God dwells where he dwells." But when a Temple was built, and the conditions did not change at all, the prophets of the second and third generations said, " Our society is not yet what it ought to be, the priests are neglecting their duty, the people are not separate enough from the strangers and from persons of mixed blood. We must purify our sacrifices, and we must put away all strange things, even [strange

wives as well. Then shall the great change come, and there shall be new heavens and a new earth."

*How the new Bible of Ezra and its plans
did not work the expected wonder*

BUT Ezra and Nehemiah fulfilled all these demands, and the new teaching and laws they brought and established were a pledge of the more perfect holiness of the congregations. And yet again circumstances did not improve, and there was no sign of the coming of the new kingdom. So a new explanation was preached: that the great fault of the fathers was not yet fully forgiven; and this, along with their own failings, caused a separation between the people and God, and so also maintained the gulf between the present darkness and the expected future glory. So they began to speak much of sin, and of the need to be redeemed from it. Fellowships were formed of those who made it their duty to fulfil the laws punctually and exactly; and these called themselves the Pious ones, or "the Saints," and also the Separated ones, or "the Pharisees." In other

respects they began to content themselves with quiet waiting, and in meditation on future things. They saw the Persian Empire go to ruin ; they saw the rise of the Greek sovereignty, which apportioned the little Jewish people to the Ptolemies of Egypt. That set them to reckoning : so and so many empires had passed away one after another, and Jahweh had clearly ordained all this, and made all men and creatures subject to each of these successive new empires ; how many earthly empires were due to pass away ere the heavenly kingdom came ? In heaven Jahweh was already King ; and around Him there the higher beings were preparing for the erection of His Kingdom upon earth also,—but when should it appear ? As the result of this way of reflection there arose gradually a remarkable theory of history, constructed one half from the course of events, which were certainly not very well known, and the other half out of the ever-growing expectation and doctrine of a great final catastrophe, to be followed immediately by the foundation of the everlasting Kingdom of God. Men had the feeling that they were living in an *interim* ;

and a weary long interim it was. Many Jews lost patience, and were dazzled by the brilliance of Greek power and civilisation, but also no doubt by desire for riches and comfort. They became unfaithful to their Laws. These were the so-called "Ungodly." And yet the kernel of the people held on, and waited still for centuries, patient although oppressed, poor and poorly cultured, "waiting for the consolation of Israel." To be rich came to mean almost the same as to be "Ungodly"; to be poor almost the same as to be a "Saint." They cheered themselves with their worship in the Temple, and by reading works of edification; sometimes, too, they edified themselves over Divine judgments upon some neighbouring enemy. But their chief comfort was in that secret counsel of God which, said they, was always known to His worshippers.

*The thick darkness under the reign of the
"mad" Antiochus*

THEN came the very hardest period which the little society experienced after the Exile. The Syrians wrenched Palestine from the Egyptians;

and now the mad Antiochus Epiphanes (175 B.C.) conceived the idea of converting the Jews into Greeks. Jahweh was driven out of His Temple by the God of the Greeks, the Books of Laws were torn up, and circumcision was forbidden.

Should not the Jews now give up all hope for a Kingdom of God? Should they not see it to be a senseless idea, that they, the oppressed, should become the future rulers of the world? No! not so; hope flamed out mightier now than ever, that the Kingdom of God would come, and that right early. Soon after the desecration of the Temple, the book of Daniel appeared, and announced that the rule of God would begin within four years. Here was boldness unparalleled, only weakened a little by the fact that the author did not set his own name to his prediction. But "the three and a half years" went by, and although the Temple was certainly rescued by the Maccabeans, yet the Kingdom of God did not come. Marvellous to relate, only a few years later new prophets proclaimed to Jerusalem: "Rejoice, O Zion, thy King cometh. He shall reign

unto the ends of the earth. Thou shalt see Him in His glory."

So always again came the same drama. When Jerusalem and Judah were ravaged most terribly by Antiochus Sidetes (130 B.C.), what did the prophets think of this? They called it the Prelude to the Last Judgment: the earth should soon shiver and burst at every point; the demons should be flung to the winds, and the kings of earth into deepest dungeons! Glorious light was speedily to appear on Mount Zion.

Then the Roman rule came; but again one prophetic oracle followed another; and through the first Christian century, and after it, we find the remarkable Apocalyptic literature ever freshly appearing. More than once the Romans had to contend in stern warfare for their rule against armed preachers of the Kingdom of God. When at last Judaism became contented with quiet study and development of its laws, the old claims were by no means given up. The Jew was still the secret or avowed pretender to the throne of the world.

Features in detail, of the great Hope

WE must endeavour to paint some colour into this mere sketch of the history of that Imperial Hope, which we have followed through more than seven centuries. It has been already mentioned that a theory of the history arose gradually: the Kingdom of God would not come, said the dreamers, until a certain number of earthly empires had followed each other, and each one of these was to maintain its power until "its time was full." The writer of the book of Daniel conceives of these empires in the form of raging beasts; while the Kingdom of God and His Saints is pictured in symbol by the form of a man, who receives power over all the world from the Divine Judge. All the prophets of that time expected the great change to come soon and in their own time; and that before the last Judgment many signs would appear, especially great trouble for Jerusalem. It was by these signs that the Apocalyptists were able to calculate the "times."

The great Judgment is not always described in the same way: some writers represent it as

a general slaughter taking place all over the earth ; while others say that all the nations are to gather together round Jerusalem, there to make perhaps a final fierce onslaught on the holy city, and then to be destroyed. As time goes on, the writers bring the physical world more and more into the catastrophe ; we find it gradually added that heaven and earth, the sun, the moon and stars are all to suffer. It is the later Apocalyptists that seem to enjoy painting the great catastrophe with most gruesome and demonic colours. Several of them describe the Last Judgment as having two phases : in the first of these the kings of the earth and their superhuman helpers, demons and dragons, are to be bound and imprisoned in the abyss ; then is to follow a time of rest when the people of God are to be restored, in a period which is compared with the seventh day of the creation week, and is reckoned as lasting a thousand years, a figure sustained by using the chronology of the Greek Old Testament. After this follows the final Judgment, and the utter destruction of all things that oppose God, along with the new

creation of the earth and the descent of the heavenly Kingdom which is called the heavenly Jerusalem. The expected ideal may be described in various ways by various writers, nevertheless it always consists essentially in the sovereignty of Jerusalem over the whole earth. Ezekiel had spoken of wonders in the restored Jerusalem and the sacred land. The author of Isaiah 56 to 66—"Third Isaiah"—says that the doors of the city shall stand open day and night, in order that a ceaseless stream of wealth given by all nations,—gold, incense, and sacrificial victims,—may enter in, convoyed by the kings of the nations. The dwellers in Zion shall then be all righteous, busied only with the sacred offices of worship; while the strangers are to watch the flocks for them and plough their fields. Jahweh is to come down from heaven upon Zion, to dwell there; and his glorious light shall lighten the sacred mountain and its feasting assemblies. Sun and moon shall grow pale; their light is needed no more. In those days men shall live as long as the oaks, as they did in the first days of creation; he who dies at a hundred years shall count as dying young.

City and country shall be filled with home-coming Jews; the strangers shall bring them in litters laid upon dromedaries and mules, and then shall remain to be their slaves. Even all this was not enough; so Jahweh would bring their dead to life again by causing His dew to descend upon them, the dew that was supposed to be kept stored in the starry heavens for this purpose. The land should bloom and bear with wonderful fertility, so that its inhabitants should be renowned in all the world. Certainly all sin and impurity should be put away from their borders. All nations must come each year to Jerusalem for the great feasts; every pot in the land should be holy, in order to be fit to serve the multitude at the sacred meals. As for ungodliness, its abode should be in Babylon in those days; Edom should be changed into a very hell, and be the abode of evil spirits. All apostate Jews should be bound in Gehinnom on the south of Zion,—whence we have learned in later times to speak of hell as “Gehenna”; in these miserable beings the gnawing worm would never die, nor the fire be quenched, but the suffering damned should

furnish a ghastly spectacle for the Saints as they went to and fro for their worship at the holy house.

The King of the Coming Kingdom

THE representations which we have chiefly followed so far, make no mention of a future king for the Kingdom of God. Jahweh Himself was to be present, either in His actual person or in His accredited representatives. Before Him the elders were to sit in council for the government of the people. The Theocracy was to be in a sense a spiritual Republic ; yet certainly a Kingdom also, because God Himself would be truly King. Ezekiel had much to say of a "Prince"; but gave him only the task of meeting the costs of the Temple worship. Possibly representations of this sort are closely connected with a certain peculiarity in the post-exilic literature, namely, that it had no love for kingship, and even looked back on the election of Saul to the throne as a departure from Jahweh. On the other hand, there are a number of well-known predictions which look for the coming of a king of the

Davidic line. He is not to enter on his task until after the great Judgment, but some writers expect that he shall be born during the troubles of the latter days. He is to be thoroughly a Prince of Peace, and, of course, a humble follower of the laws, meditating on them always.

We are not quite right in calling all these hopes for the future "Messianic prophecies"; our mistake has arisen from the influence of the New Testament. The Maccabean Princes did not dislike to identify their own kingship with the Messianic rule. Prophecies that are properly Messianic naturally exalt the worldly side of the Divine Kingdom, if we may use such an expression; while it is those that are strictly theocratic that present rather the spiritual and ritual side. Yet we must not press the contrast too sharply; for hopes of this kind concerning the future, which had taken seven centuries for their development, and which had always been very dependent on the state of the times, were sure to have a good many contradictory elements in them.

*Various minds : various features of
expectation*

It is scarcely necessary to prove that the intensity of the hope would vary much as it arose in different persons; indeed it differed much according as it appeared in various classes of the people. Those with whom all was well in the world could afford to wait; while the poor, the weary and heavy laden, were thirsting for the promised salvation. While one author recommends patience, and counsels his hearers to "fret not themselves because of the ungodly," another, even in the midst of quite different reflections, will break out suddenly with the cry, "Oh that God would root out all the wicked!" The poet in the book of Job avoids purposely all mention of the idea of the coming crisis, although it would have done him excellent service in working out his theodicy; he rather flies to the wonders of nature that he may find God, when he seems to have lost hold of Him. Then there are others, few indeed at first, who take a middle path to find comfort for the soul when the coming of

the Kingdom of God seems long delayed ; they turn to the idea of individual immortality. This hope did not arise until quite late ; at first it was simply a sort of secret doctrine for the Sons of God, then later it was adopted as a general doctrine of the Pharisees, but was severely opposed by the hierarchy, as the New Testament shows. It was not quite easy to bring this conception of immortality into organic relation with the ideas of the End of the world, and with the hope that the dead would then rise. The like problem indeed gave much trouble to our Protestant Fathers ; many of whom were swayed, of course, by their idea that the Kingdom of God was something objective, and so preferred the simple solution of the problem which supposed that souls remain in a condition of sleep until the general resurrection. To-day, on the contrary, the tendency is to reject entirely the idea of a general resurrection as a part of the final drama ; or, if it is not expressly rejected, it is forgotten. For our modern individualism is much more concerned with the isolated fate of the individual than with the idea of a Kingdom

that includes and concerns men as a whole. In the days when our New Testament was being written, many held firmly to the old Hebrew idea that souls sleep in the grave ; others supposed that they are assembled and waiting in some particular place on the confines of the earth, which may perhaps be the old Paradise itself. But however men may have thought about this matter in the olden times, the question of the condition of the dead was never of such importance as was the expectation of the coming Kingdom of God.

Just what was expected ?

THE expectation was that a general catastrophe was to come upon the world and upon all men. The world was to be entirely changed, and all men were to be destroyed except those Jews who were faithful to their Law and any strangers who attached themselves to these as their followers. The life of all such blessed ones would then be upright, and free from sin and sorrow ; they would be the true People of God, enjoying the everlasting glory and bliss that had been prepared of God for them from

the foundation of all things. That is the idea of the world which the Old Testament religion produced ; that was the hope and the prevailing mind of all the Saints.

Criticism of the hopes

LET us now venture on a critical estimate of this idea. It has been often enough criticised, but for the most part, as it seems to me, in a feeble and superficial fashion. When the critics have been much accustomed to think in the abstract, they have pointed out sharply the material and “fleshly” side of the old hopes, and many have besides been very bitter over the brilliant part which the Jews expected to play, and the pitiable share they assigned to all who were not Jews.

Perhaps poets and the students of the history of civilisation, and the philosophers, would judge more kindly than the theologians, one and all, have done. They would say that a process of thought, strong enough to produce a literature ever growing through more than seven centuries, a process of thought that is still productive to-day, after two thousand years of fertility, is no contemptible pheno-

menon. They would say that it deserves the thoughtful interest of educated men as much as does the system of the Universe, or as do the ideals of the Perfect Republic that have been produced by other nations. They would, perhaps, point out how that old Jewish drama of the future never leaves the visible stage of human history, and that nevertheless it can claim to have changed that stage and moulded history itself. And they would remark that the many strange fancies woven into it do not render it less worthy than are the hesitating, indefinite, heartless abstractions which content us to-day when we talk of the future. For, in yonder half-patient and half-impatient waiting for the act of the Creator, there was a grander note than there is in our present-day fancy that the nature of the world is going to be altered by our tiny ant-like operations. The student of the history of religion would, doubtless, have more to add. He would point out that, when men really began to be men they had for a long time no idea of the world as a whole. And even when they rose to think about their religion and their duty, they limited the range

of affairs, that they considered, to the small horizon that they could see with the bodily eye. But then, at least, some peoples developed their religions further, and with great energy, though with little knowledge, they devised a plan of their universe, which begins with one drama and ends with another. This childlike scheme was certainly a teleological philosophy, with God and man at the centre, and all ideals and all disappointments grouped and arranged within the circumference. To-day, with bodily and mental eye, we search all the heights and depths of the world and of its history, and we discover all the laws of its existence and its progress; but what we see threatens, as we fancy, to overwhelm us. Our childish courage shrinks back from the sight, as from some great soulless machine. We have not the courage to believe that One Will can stand behind it all. We fancy that the creative power of man lies *to-day* in his exact knowledge, and in the application of what he knows, and does not consist in the power to will, nor in the great sense of human solidarity, nor in the power to feel the working soul of the world. Alas! humanity

is growing old ; religion has to fight for her very existence, and is seeking her safety in nervous trivialities, because she has lost her great Hope, her faith in the Ever-unfolding Kingdom of God.

*Which is it to be with us : Hope and progress,
or fear and stagnation ?*

MUST these things be ! Must religion fall under the wheels, instead of driving the chariot herself ? Has she lost her Prophetic nature ; and must she now again live for the present, for the little range in time and space which the human soul can take in at one glance ?

Jesus of Nazareth stood assuredly on the side of the Prophets ; and whosoever holds with Him must know that the kernel of His gospel was the proclamation of the *Ever-coming Kingdom of God*. He took over this task from John the Baptist, as He says Himself ; but then He says also that He means this in a sense somewhat different indeed from that of His forerunner. John, says He, seemed to those around him to be “ possessed of a devil, because he neither ate nor drank ; I eat and drink,

though I am called glutton and wine-bibber.” Then ironically, He added the proverb, “Wisdom is justified of her children.” To appearance here, He would make the representatives of a Cause of less importance than the Cause itself; but He does so only because of those feeble hearers who will not take care to test the movement on its own merits, but would judge it by its external accompaniments. In reality, Jesus does not put Himself into the background in the quoted statement. He goes on to say that, “from the days of John the Baptist, men have been even storming the Kingdom of Heaven in order to get in; therefore, John is the greatest man that ever was born. And nevertheless the least citizen of the Kingdom will be greater than John, for John could only proclaim it, but could not live to see it.” Jesus Himself was not merely to live to see it; He was to bring it.

How Jesus brings an “Ever-coming Kingdom”

“THE Kingdom of God is coming soon, and men are to prepare for it, and are to watch for

the hour when it shall appear." Thus does Jesus most strikingly take up the old ideas; but then He makes His own corrections of the expectations as He found them. First He makes corrections of their outer form. He says, "You must not try to reckon the day and hour of the coming of the Kingdom; you must give up seeking for the strange signs which, now here and now there, are expected to indicate its coming, as if it were in one place and nowhere else. When it comes it shall appear amongst you. Everywhere over all the earth it shall appear, just as the lightning which shines over the whole heavens, and is seen over all the face of the earth. You must not ask when it is to come, for it shall come as a thief in the night, and God only knows the hour." So Jesus strips off the apocalyptic form from the expectation; He forbids material curiosity, and demands a purely religious hope. It is probably true that He believed the end of the world would be seen by the generation actually living around Him; but He was not fully pledged to this opinion, He was not even pledged to it by His belief that the realisation of the

Kingdom was bound up with His own Person. He was quite ready to die before it came, for He was to rise again. He was to come on the clouds of Heaven.

Jesus criticised men's expectations

HIS second and more important correction of the current idea concerned traditional views of what men should receive in the Kingdom of God. Hitherto the opinion had been that the Kingdom was appointed for the children of Abraham, for the Jewish people; excluding, of course, those who had been untrue to the Laws, for these were to be destroyed. Strangers could only be admitted as followers and servants of the Jews and of the Temple. Jesus did not deny the historical strength of these Jewish claims; He goes so far as to say of Himself that He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. But He also welcomes to His love unhesitatingly men who are not Jews; and also those who were called "Sinners," because they had often transgressed the Laws. These should sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast, if only they were fit to

be true citizens of the Kingdom. Then he devotes by far the greater part of His utterances to instructions concerning this fitness. And concerning the qualities one must possess in order to obtain a right to citizenship in the Kingdom, He teaches how the claim is to be weighed and recognised, how all things must be given up for it, and how it may be held fast or lost. He tells how it shall be hard for those to enter the Kingdom of God who cannot free themselves from the unholy Mammon which chains men's souls to this world. It will be hard for those who trust to their own wisdom, hard for those who give chief importance to secondary matters in religion, hard for those who seek honour from men, hard for those who forget love amid their external pietism, and for those who cannot forgive a brother :—for all these it will be hard indeed to enter into the Kingdom of God.

But he who is poor and who feels himself poor, counting himself only a trustee of his goods,—he is the heir to the Coming Kingdom. And the peaceable, modest, pure-hearted man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is

also of the number of the heirs. Little children have angels who always stand before God, says Jesus, and so their faces are not yet darkened by suffering and anxiety, but they beam with the light of the wonders of God ; so children, and childlike souls, can understand the Kingdom of God and can possess it. There was a Canaanite woman and there was a Roman soldier who saw the Divine power in Jesus, and who felt the fact of the divine world that centred in Him ; and so help came to these. There is only a narrow road to lead us out of this world lying all round us ; Jesus came to show us that road, and it leads into everlasting life.

Did He make changes enough ?

THUS does Jesus transfer the centre of religion out from the historical People of Israel into the inner soul of every man ; it is the soul, says He, that must be set free from this world. But now are we not to say that Jesus should have made a further correction in the expectations which he found ? Should he not have set aside the dramatic form of the great crisis, with its universal catastrophe, with its Last

Judgment, its sudden and miraculous change of the earth, and its resurrection of the Saints? For has it not been commonly understood that the drama which was important in His eyes was that of the individual soul, with its conversion and its new birth from above? And surely the future of the soul as such was for Him what we call immortality, and that blessed everlasting life of each soul after death, at some place, not indeed known geographically, except that it is not on earth. This has been certainly the common theory. In reality, however, our teaching and preaching concerning Jesus have quietly made a correction here; for even where the ideas of the Last Day and the Resurrection are not quite ignored, they are now quite lifeless and powerless! And yet these ideas were not dead for Jesus. To Him the Kingdom of God was to be an objective reality; an actual fellowship of citizens, some of whom would be great and some small. And the Kingdom was to be set up on the new earth after external revolutions, and at the close of a great Assizes, where He Himself should judge all men. It is not right simply to ignore

these ideas; we must try to understand them.

*How can we connect Jesus with changes
that we make?*

FIRST then, the explanation of them must be sought in the old view that the world was created in three great parts, all arranged by the hand of God at Creation. Uppermost was the solid dome containing the throne of God and the angels. This was Heaven, where God's will is done perfectly. Under this was the Earth, with its inhabitants all fallen away from God, busied in the earthly empires over which the Prince of this world rules. Then deep beneath all were the abodes of the dead. Such was the philosophy of Jesus, as it was that of His times. Now if ever these three parts were to be merged in one, and if God was to rule on the earth, which had become the sporting ground of the demons; if He would set up again His perfect government, and give the dead Saints a share therein: then this could be accomplished only by some great deed comparable to the first act of creation. Possibly,

of course, we might venture to think that Jesus would not have held to this form of expectation, if He could have seen the earth as we see it. For He always showed Himself to be above mere form, even if it were sanctified and supported by Moses, and by centuries of usage and wont, as well as by the opinion of the whole people about Him and their teachers. He concerned Himself only with the kernel of things, and with the true inner meanings of doctrine and of practice. Never was any one spiritually so free as Jesus.

Yet certainly He would not have given up the true meaning of that old idea of the world, and we must not give it up. What was that? The real and true meaning of that conception was that we are not independent individuals : we are not each one able at his will to cut himself loose from the world and to follow each one his own path ; we have all one origin and one goal, the origin in this earth and the goal in God. For Jesus that divinely ordered history which we call religion is leading us up from the dark mother earth, where we actually have our roots, up into the air and

sunlight of God. Jesus would not have rejected the idea of the Kingdom as the fellowship of souls, nor would He have overlooked the connection of our history with that of the earth itself. He saw the necessity that the very earth itself must be changed.

*A parallel and a contrast : Indian
Philosophy versus Christian Faith*

A GREAT parallel to this rises before us most naturally in the story of Indian philosophy. The faith of that system was that originally there was only one perfect Being, and that then an ill-guided tendency towards life produced the world of individuals with their imperfections and their sufferings. But the goal of all the physical world and of all its creatures, and even of the Gods themselves, is to return into the original single Being, where there shall never again be any "Thou" or "I."

That Indian philosophy and the Christian idea of the Coming Kingdom of God are the greatest conceptions that mankind has ever known. They include the whole of the world in their outlook. They rise to the highest

heights, above the tendency of most men towards absorption in the aims and acquirements of the present. They are systems for eternity.

But there is a double and broad contrast between the two. The Indian sage is always striving to return to absolutely motionless Being, to the extinction of all individuality, and to such attainment of perfect rest. The Christian hopes for a Kingdom of citizens, for the highest development of individuality, for a life in joy and power. The Indian sage would free himself even from volition : the Christian means through God to make himself free, and to rise to the very highest power of the Will. Therefore while the Indian desires to escape from the world of volitional activity, the Christian does exactly the opposite, making his wish and his will into the driving power of his highest efforts. He says, "Father, Thy Kingdom come, may Thy Will rule in earth as in heaven."

The Christian does not believe that the world was called into being by a mischievous desire for life : it was created by the Will of God.

He calls this God "Our Father," and sees in Him the goal of all that lives. The Christian is for ever looking onwards; he feels in himself and sees around him a germination, a growth, and a ripening, all moved by one higher Will. Amid all this each soul is drawn forward and lifted upward by that one living Power whom we all call Our Father, and who is the goal for us all. He only understands Jesus truly who feels within himself the movement onwards and upwards that is working in all things that exist; and such a man's heart leaps for joy when he thinks on God. The Christian religion is profoundly concerned with the future; it is the religion of hope.

There must be conflicts

OUR journey through life will never be long without some stumbling, nor will growth be without pain, nor will there be progress without hindrances. We shall not obtain our freedom from this world, and from its law of inertia, without fighting. Therefore Jesus adds to the prayer for the coming of the Kingdom other petitions also: those for forgiveness of

sin, and for protection from temptation. In like manner He teaches us to fight, and if need be to forsake wife and children, and to tear out the eye that misleads us. Life is all one long battle for the attainment of true personality; therefore He plants His own person in the front of the ranks, and it is those who gather to His standard there that shall become the citizens of the Kingdom of God. He fought the battle with this world for the sake of all of us; and the world was bound to kill Him because it could not comprehend Him. So He became the Elder Brother and Master of the new humanity which is ripening for the new world.

How certainty comes

SHALL we try to prove that He was right? Must we show by processes of argument how He was right, as opposed to the Indian sages, who with unexampled self-denial strove to free themselves from the world by extinction of their own personality? Must we prove him right as over against the Old Testament sage, who thought he had discovered that all the

ceaseless changing in this world is only one constant repetition, without progress and without any gain for men? Have we to prove that He was right with his immeasurably bold conception that the vision of God is reserved for the children of this poor earth?

Not so! For no man can prove the highest: either we feel it, or we do not feel it. And when one feels it, it is then that he must set about understanding it. The great German poet wrote:

*“Du musst glauben, du musst wagen;
Denn die Götter leih’n kein Pfand;
Nur ein Wunder kann dich tragen
In das schöne Wunderland.”*

*(“You must trust, and you must dare;
For no God will pledge his hand;
Only wonders ever bear
You to the lovely wonderland.”)*

Progress seems folly: it is Divine wisdom

THOSE who are bondslaves under the law of inertia in spite of their constant talk of progress, and those wise men who refuse to move away from what they have already got,

those self-appointed leaders of the century and experts in all the world's wisdom, will call us fanatics, because we believe in a living Power within all events, and a living goal for all development. They will decry us as fools for our hoping, and will laugh to scorn our Christian Utopia. And we cannot call them wrong, from their point of view. Aye, most Christians do not know what they are saying when they pray "Thy Kingdom come!" But those who do know have a feeling that for them these words throw a beam of light upon the riddle of the world and of life. They have a sense that everything that struggles upwards out of chaos towards life and consciousness, everything amid our confused crowding that presses towards the light through battle and through error, everything in the soul of mankind that seeks to educate itself by much searching and testing, everything in us that weaves dreams and sings of ideals,—everything of all this follows a magnetic force that is leading both the material and the spiritual world to a higher destiny, even to the very highest. All is following the magnetic power

of that something which Jesus calls "Our Father." Such men see in all that we call evolution, in all the marvels of the physical world, in the marvel of life, in the marvel of the human spirit, only the first stages of a great building that by-and-by shall be the abode of the fellowship of those free spirits who have communion with God.

*Toil on, hoping always : so receive the
Ever-coming Kingdom*

THEY know indeed full well that all this will not come about of itself, under a mere natural law of necessity : men must will ! We must work hard, to build up our own life ; we must fight, and so grow strong and then ripen like true men. All the time we must pray like children, "Father, Thy Kingdom come."

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